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we were warped off with a kedge, and anchored till the following day, when we turned towards the northern opening; but, owing to the want of wind, made but little progress towards it, merely passing a few miles beyond the town. The calm continuing the next day, the boats were got out and towed us for some time, but at length a breeze sprung up, and we neared the opening, which was exceedingly narrow, scarcely affording space for a frigate to pass through. The waves were tumbling on the reef with a stunning noise, and the breeze not being altogether in our favour, we were almost in despair of clearing the opening; yet on we went, both boats still towing—nearer and nearer we came to the breakers, and smaller appeared the chance of avoiding them; suddenly the breeze fell, and the current set us in towards them,—two minutes more and we should have been among them, but fortunately, the boats turned the vessel's head round in time, and as there was just room to tack, we were safe, anchoring in 12 fathoms water immediately afterwards. The crew soon commenced their usual amusement of fishing, and in a very short time we were provided with a magnificent garopa for supper. The next day the breeze being fair we passed through with safety, and left this beautiful island far behind us.

III.—*Remarks on the Country, Products, and Appearance of the Island of Rodriguez, with Opinions as to its future Colonization.*
By EDWARD HIGGIN, Esq. (Communicated by H. E. Strickland, F.R.G.S.)

[Read June 26, 1848.]

THE Island of Rodriguez is one of the dependencies of Great Britain, and at present within the jurisdiction of the government of the Mauritius. It is situated in Lat. 19° 30' S., Long. 63° 50' E., within the tropics, and under the influence of the south-east trade-winds.

The land extends in a nearly due east and west direction for about 12 miles, with coral reefs running out about 3 miles more at the western end. The width varies from 3 to 6 miles, the narrowest part being towards the east, where the cliffs rise abruptly from the shore, with deep water immediately outside a barrier reef. The appearance of the island is striking from the ocean. A central peak of granite rises from the midst of a group of hills, divided from each other by valleys running north and south.

The chief substance of the land is granite, with beds of

overlying sandstone and limestone. Masses of red and grey granite are met with, which appear to have been subject to igneous action, and are much disintegrated. The subsoil appeared generally to be clay, a stiff gravelly earth with a fine loam on the surface—but the rapid growth of vegetation in such a climate prevents a cursory examination, such as mine, from being worth much.

The mildness of the climate equals or exceeds that of the Mauritius. The island is of too small an extent to feel the influence of “land and sea breezes,” but the steady trade-wind keeps the temperature cool and equable. The same cause produces great humidity, the quantity of rain that falls being very great.

There are springs of excellent water in the interior, but on the coast the natives are dependent on the water coming down the rivulets, which, after rain, is charged with calcareous matter, or tinged with iron, and in summer not unfrequently fails altogether. Several small cascades are found on the northern side. The chief stream falls over a rock about 60 feet high, and shortly after enters the sea, at the Port of Mathurin.

From the hilly nature of the land, the rain which falls is soon restored to the ocean; an hour after a shower has fallen, the thundering of the cascades may be heard some distance, but the disturbance soon ceases, and a tiny streamlet alone remains.

The “Port of Mathurin,” as the harbour is called, is merely a sheltered roadstead to leeward of the island, with the anchoring ground some $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the shore. There is a deep and tolerable large basin, with 13 to 15 fathoms water (the sides of which are formed by precipitous coral reefs, over which the breakers roll incessantly), where small vessels anchor; but it would hardly be safe for large vessels, and Captain Kelly, of H.M.S. Conway, when on an exploring expedition in 1844, preferred anchoring his ship outside the reefs, in 35 fathoms. An opening in the reef enables boats to go backwards and forwards without much danger from the surf.

There is but small tidal rise, the variation being from 5 to 6 feet between high and low water. After a hurricane, storm-waves break on the shore, but, I found, without the damaging effects which result from them in the Mauritius.

Many fruits and vegetables thrive with cultivation. Thus oranges, lemons, limes, shaddocks, peas, beans, onions, turnips, and cabbages, are easily reared. The banana, plantain, custard apple, strawberry, and raspberry are found wild. Yams and cassava, which form the bulk of the food of the inhabitants, are native to the soil. The potato does not seem to

answer; it has been several times introduced, but from some cause or other has died out.

Very fine Indian corn is grown, and a species of mountain rice. Wheat and oats have never been tried. The sugar-cane and cotton-shrub grow wild, together with several kinds of palm, among which are the mountain-cabbage, cocoa-nut, &c. The coffee-plant I did not see, but the nature of the country would be favourable for its growth. The trees consist of tamarind and acacia, the latter growing to considerable size, and bearing quantities of gum. There are also a few mango trees and tamarisks, and others with whose names I am not acquainted.

There is, however, no great number of trees, nor any approach to forest growth. The most common production found is the "Vacquah," or screw-pine palm, the leaves of which are so extensively used in Madagascar for making mats for the sugar of the Mauritius. Canes and bamboos grow in marshy places, but those we saw were not of elastic or superior kinds. The natives build their huts of them, and thatch them with the leaves of the palm.

There are no snakes or venomous creatures, except centipedes and scorpions, which are not uncommon in the huts, but are seldom dangerous. Large spiders, grasshoppers, and locusts are found, but no lizards, adders, or bats, that we saw or heard of. Wild cattle and pigs are said to inhabit the most westerly portion of the land, but in no great quantities. Wild cats, rats, and mice exist all over the island.

Guinea-fowl in large flocks abound everywhere. To protect them (for what use is difficult to conceive) the Mauritius government has introduced a code of Game Laws! the absurdity of which cannot but excite a smile at its legislation. There are few other land birds. The "man-of-war" hawk and the beautiful "tropic-bird" build their nests in-shore. A great variety of sea-birds make their homes in the cliffs and on the sandy islets, and their eggs form no inconsiderable portion of the food of the inhabitants. Poultry, ducks, and geese have been introduced and do well. The American whalers exchange their flour and biscuits for them and for water.

The seas abound with very fine fish—red and white mullet—"les gros yeux" and "captain's" fish being the most palatable. The latter form the chief portion of the exports to the Mauritius, and are, both when fresh and salted, excellent.

Our food for 58 days consisted of the above kinds of fish, with cassava. Land and sea-crabs abound.

According to a report made by M. Bacy, a Creole gentleman

appointed in 1843 magistrate of Rodriguez, the population consists of about 250 souls, one-fifth only being females! As might be expected, a sad state of immorality prevails from this last deficiency. It is a common thing for a woman to have 4 or 5 husbands; the children are brought up together—the husband for the time being acting as father. The race from which the natives have sprung is African and Madagascan. They are intensely black and ugly—with all the worst features of the lowest class of negro. The original founders of the colony were slaves from the Mauritius.

They are very lazy and often on the point of starvation, though nature so bountifully provides for them. They are fond of dress, and of ardent spirits, which they receive from the whalers in return for their poultry.

The great number of vessels during the last years wrecked on the southern reefs, which *run out several miles farther than marked on the charts*, has induced the Governor of Mauritius to introduce 6 Creole policemen, with a code of regulations, but without boats, ropes, guns, or rockets, wherewith to assist vessels in distress. British goods cannot be introduced except after having paid the heavy customs-dues of the Mauritius, for which no drawback is allowed. The chief magistrate has no power summarily to dispose of misdemeanors and offences, but is required to hear and collect all evidence, and to send the accused and his accusers to the Mauritius.

IV.—*Notes on the Island of Cocos, and two of the Galapagos.*

By Rear-Admiral Sir GEORGE SEYMOUR, K.C.B. (Communicated by the Admiralty.)

[Read November 13, 1848.]

THE Island of Quibo is about the same size as the Isle of Wight. Off the points ledges of rock generally extend; but there is an appearance of an anchoring-place in the intervening bays on the E. side, along which I proceeded in the 'Sampson' steam-vessel. The soil on the coast is good, but the interior is nearly inaccessible from the steepness of the cliffs and the tangled vegetation. We found traces of pearl-divers having visited the shores; but there were no inhabitants, except at the small islet of Ranchirea, between which and the N.E. end of Quibo there is good anchorage. A Frenchman of the name of Sorget is resident on Ranchirea; and this situation, as far as I could judge on a cursory view, seems more favourable for an establishment than any we saw on the larger island.